

Oublette

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Oubliette

by [BowieSpawan](#)

Summary

An accident leaves Hannibal Lecter in a coma, a corpse to be discovered in the trunk of his car and law enforcement desperate for answers.

With the help of a new technology, allowing therapists to directly access the psyche of catatonic and comatose patients, they enter Hannibal's mind palace, underestimating the danger he poses, even unconscious and strapped to a bed.

Loosely inspired by the movie *The Cell*. No prior knowledge of the movie is required for this story.

overture

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Good morning, Dr. Du Maurier, thank you for joining us for this debriefing." Jack Crawford shakes the delicate woman's hand, dwarfed by his own large palm. He waves for them all to sit down at the long table in one of Quantico's many bland impersonal conference rooms.

"It's no trouble, Agent Crawford. I'm not sure I have much that will be of help, yet, but I'm determined to continue the work, despite my current lack of progress. Dr. Lecter is a complicated individual, so I'm not surprised at the momentary stalemate. I'm not too proud to admit that he could talk circles around me during our past therapy sessions and, as you can imagine, it is several orders of magnitude worse when directly interacting with him within his mind."

"Not to worry, doctor. We appreciate you putting yourself out there like that. You probably know him best, for however much that is worth. What *can* you tell us, right now?"

Will slouches in his own chair, merely observing for the moment, as she folds her hands in her lap, her whole bearing one of stoic dignity.

He can't even imagine what it must be like to immerse yourself in a prolific murderer's mind like that, communing with them directly inside their very core. The killers crawling into his own head, unbidden and unwanted, every damn investigation in the wake of his empathic analysis, are quite enough for him, thank you very much.

"I used to refer to his outward affect as a *human veil*, a *person suit*, if you will. The best approximation Hannibal can create at a neurotypical, socially acceptable disguise. It's a very good facsimile, but being him, it's still colored by his preference for grand gestures, the dramatic, the operatic. His mind is no different on the inside. He often mentioned his mind palace to me - I assume you're familiar with the method of loci, creating a mental construct to store and retrieve knowledge and memories. I was not prepared for the reality of it. If you can imagine taking a stroll through the library of Alexandria stored in the most beautiful renaissance architecture you can imagine and suffused with all the most tantalizing smells and music, you might come close." She sits very still in her seat, no obvious tics betraying any nervousness. But her extreme stillness seems to Will a tic in its own right. Like a doe freezing in the glare of approaching headlights.

"You sound quite admiring of him." Will speaks up, not really a question, but his tone is neutral, non-judgemental.

"I know you've only seen the aftermath, only known the man with his meticulous mask removed, but believe me when I tell you, that Hannibal Lecter is a man unlike any other. He is blessed with intelligence, but never lets it sit idle, constantly striving to improve himself. He took the ideal of the *uomo universale* and sought to make it a reality, using his own flesh and blood as the clay."

"Nobody's without flaws. I'm sure you'll find the right lever to open the floodgates of confession eventually. Guys like him, they *want* to talk about their accomplishments, homicidal ones included. Has he mentioned any of his victims to you? Did he eat *all* of them, at least partially? Did he kill more than just the ones we can now link him to as the Chesapeake Ripper?" Jack prods.

Will can already tell, from all the evidence he's seen during this investigation - in boxes and in the morgue, and from perusing Dr. Lecter's home and office for clues - that the man wouldn't say a single word that isn't also part of some greater game for his own amusement. It's lonely at the top and Lecter is the cream of the crop in several regards - a rich European Count, a sought after socialite, an erudite conversationalist. Talking with Hannibal Lecter is probably always more *quid pro quo* than *cor ad cor loquitur*.

"He has not. He is, unfortunately, very adept at changing the subject without his conversational partner noticing. I'm not immune to his maneuvering. The most I can tell you, is that he has likely killed far more people than we will ever know. What has been found evidence of in his home is but the tip of the iceberg." She uncrosses and recrosses her legs, still with that unflappable demeanor. "I would highly recommend getting Miss Lass into contact with an experienced hypno-therapist. They might just be able to uncover things she witnessed while in his captivity that he would have never let slip otherwise, secure in his belief that his psychic driving would override any hint of his involvement."

Jack's voice trembles with fury any time the topic of Miriam Lass is brought up. Will can tell that he's not really happy with the suggestion. "I'll take that under advisement. She can only remember flashing lights and the same voice, always speaking to her at length about the many awful things he was going to do to her. I'm frankly just glad we found *someone* alive and not in pieces in precisely labeled Tupperware. At this time she can't recall ever even meeting Lecter, but she must've found some clue of his true nature to get abducted by him. She was investigating the Ripper when she vanished, so I can only imagine she figured him out somehow. An absolute travesty, what he did to a promising agent of her caliber."

Lass might've been found alive, but her mental state is so fragile she will never become an actual agent now. Jack still firmly blames himself for getting her involved, but with Lecter's culpability revealed, he at least has one more target to unload his ire onto. It has somewhat improved his customary recalcitrant and bullying ways.

Will just can't help but think, that if Lecter hadn't gotten into that car accident with a goddamn corpse in his trunk, *in flagrante delicto*, he might've eventually crossed paths with the man, and likely ended up similarly mentally scrambled as Miriam Lass.

Lecter ending up in a coma is no great loss to the world, no matter how well educated and charismatic the man supposedly is. If it was up to Will, they'd give into the outraged masses' demands and pull the plug on his life support.

"Well, thank you again for coming, Dr. Du Maurier. Please keep us informed."

They all exchange perfunctory handshakes and then Bedelia Du Maurier glides out of the room, hair and stylish pantsuit still pristine and unruffled, much like her serene expression.

Will thinks he can see the appeal Du Maurier holds for Lecter. She's very good at presenting herself as a calm deep lake. Lecter probably thinks he can see similar monsters to his own swim past in the depths of her inscrutable gaze, flashing a curious fin or sharp-toothed maw, not realizing he is merely looking at his own reflection. She has no taste for wanton cruelty, though Will is sure she can be cruel. She holds herself apart from the general flow of humanity, presenting a placid island that a larger than life character like Lecter can find some respite on, her own self imposed social isolation making her the perfect confidante.

Will is not looking forward to getting back to his office, digging through stacks of evidence once more. He keeps dreaming about Lecter's kitchen, that state of the art morgue turned gourmet food processor. The neatly labeled containers full of choice bits of someone's daughter or husband or cousin.

Hannibal Lecter is a special kind of monster. And Will hates himself for how curious he is to find out how the man ticks.

Chapter End Notes

Oubliette - a secret dungeon or jail cell, that can only be entered from the top

Uomo universale - the 'renaissance man'. An idea first conceived of during the renaissance era, of a man striving for perfection in everything he did, pursuing creative self-expression, constantly seeking to improve himself, in harmony with nature, free of religious doctrine

Quid pro quo - tit for tat

Cor ad cor loquitur - heart speaks to heart

In flagrante delicto - basically 'caught red-handed'

act I - brindisi

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Bedelia has been utilizing the neural link technology for therapy for two years now. Her previous patients being either catatonic or nonverbal and the capabilities of the mental connection allowing them a space to interact without these physical limitations.

Their inner worlds were like the first rough crayon drawings of a toddler compared to Hannibal's mind palace. And the term *palace* is beyond apt. While she has no doubt that there's plenty of dark corners and locked doors hidden in its byzantine bowels, the places he's greeted her in so far are always opulent and beautiful. Great works of art and architecture combining to form a decadent backdrop for their conversations, the amount of clear details absolutely staggering when measured against her own paltry imagination.

She struggles to remember the day's breakfast with even a smidgen of the visceral specificity Hannibal can bring to bear for recalling even the most minute facet of anything he's ever seen, heard, smelled or tasted.

The smells in particular are still something she can't get used to, so intense at all times it borders on torturous. How Hannibal ever manages to concentrate on anything, beyond the olfactory information constantly assaulting his brain, is beyond her. In this controlled space, the scents she's encountered have been vivid, but universally pleasant so far. But how did he deal with it as a surgeon, constantly smelling disease or the stink of guts while operating? And to then go on and cut people open and rummage around in their insides *recreationally*. Is the smell of blood and viscera somehow appealing to him?

She never could have guessed at the many complex layers a common aroma like vanilla held for a person with hyperosmia. She's been dreaming about the chocolate dipped vanilla wafers he offered her the very first time she entered his mind. She hasn't been able to eat any kind of sweet baked goods, hasn't put *anything* in her mouth he's created within his mind, since.

"Good morning, Bedelia. Or is it afternoon? I confess my sense of time has become quite skewed. The only times I don't feel adrift in an amorphous sort of eternal twilight, is when you come to visit me. And for all I know, there might be years passing me by between our sessions." Hannibal looks just as impeccably put together inside his head as he ever did outside of it. The combination of red and blue, paisley and plaid, of his fitted suit, complete with tie and pocket square, should look garish, but as usual he pulls it off with aplomb.

"Hello, Hannibal. It was 10am almost to the second when the neural link was initiated. How have you been?" She finds herself strolling an eclectic amalgamation of several Italian cities today. Hannibal has dressed her mental avatar in a flattering blue summer dress and wide-brimmed sun hat, her arm hooked around his, as they amble along a picturesque canal in the perfect sunshine of Hannibal's memory construct. The air is suffused with the scent of lavender, peppermint, rosemary and other herbs she can't identify.

"I'm doing quite well, all things considered. Nothing to do here, but indulge myself." As if to punctuate that remark a glass of wine materializes in his hand. She feels the delicate crystal stem of another appear in her own. He holds out his drink for a toast, the melodious chime as the bowls meet resonating unnaturally in the quiet street. "And how have *you* been faring, my dear? Has the FBI been treating you well? I can imagine they've been badgering you quite incessantly. Hannibal the cannibal's psychiatrist must be a prized commodity for their investigation."

He had been full of mirth the first time she'd told him about his new moniker, bestowed upon him by Tattlecrime's very own Freddie Lounds. "We're not here to talk about *me*, Hannibal. Law enforcement is understandably frustrated by the lack of evidence to help identify all your past victims. They can only speculate as to the total number. Of the ones known, the families have been protesting outside the facility every day, demanding they just remove you from life support. You could garner some good will, if you just gave me *something* I can use to placate them. Some information to put their ire to rest." This is not the first time, nor will it be the last, she voices this request. She's tried various different approaches, but Hannibal remains unmoved, be it by threats, promises or by appeals to his better nature, if he even has such. She feels obligated to try, every time, even though she can't muster much enthusiasm or care herself.

The dead will continue to be dead. What use is it to know what particular dish they ended up in on Hannibal's dinner table?

"My dear Bedelia, what does the wolf care for the bleating of sheep, especially when the sheep are whole universes of consciousness removed from him? Your fretting is quite pointless. You can recount to them everything we talk about in these *sessions*. It is of no consequence to me." He shrugs elegantly and takes a slow sip of his wine, rolling the flavor around in his mouth, eyes closed in clear enjoyment. She is too afraid of what she might taste - how *good* Hannibal's remembrance of a wine might taste - forever ruining her for the real thing, were she to take a single sip.

They continue their walk for a while longer, talking only about inane things now, as she tries not to enjoy herself too much in this beautifully crafted hyperreality. The buzzing in her hindbrain, like a fly trapped in her cranium, announcing the end of the session, comes both too soon and not soon enough. Staying connected for longer than an hour at a time has proven to cause dissociative episodes among some users, and repeatedly using the link without at least a day of rest in between tends to lead to insomnia and headaches. She's not keen to experience any of these maladies and heeds the proscribed rules religiously.

"Our time is up for today, Hannibal. Please reconsider parting with some information to appease the FBI and the public's bloodlust." A final, rote plea. Her heart isn't truly in it.

She enjoys the quiet power she feels when she helps a patient overcome an obstacle. Hannibal has never needed that sort of support. And in that way, he brings out all her worst qualities. The general detachment she feels from humanity, the cruel indifference to other people's pain and suffering, the secret contempt she holds for weakness.

"Ah, but bloodlust is such a fine emotion, I wouldn't want to deprive them of the pleasure! Take care, Bedelia, I hope we will talk again soon."

The last thing she sees, before the link disengages and she blinks up at the dreary beige ceiling of the treatment room, is Hannibal's small, secretive smile. There is something foreboding about it, but she chastises herself for the unwarranted anxiety.

Hannibal Lecter is trapped in his own mind. It is quite lovely and very gilded, but still a cage nonetheless. There is nothing he can do to her and no way for him to escape.

"Any progress, Dr. Du Maurier?" One of the techs asks through the com system's loudspeaker.

"Nothing new, unfortunately." She suppresses a sigh, closing her eyes for a moment to battle the disorientation common after a session and levels herself back up into a sitting position on the cot. She avoids looking to her left, where Hannibal is securely strapped to his own, ventilator rhythmically pumping air into his lungs and the quiet beeping of the heart monitor announcing his continued existence. Coming out of his vibrant imagination and intense company to see him lying so still and silent is always beyond jarring. Not to mention how pale and grey reality itself invariably feels after a visit into his head. She focuses her eyes on the nurse hurrying into the room to detach all the electrodes and monitoring equipment.

"Better luck next time, eh?" The young man commiserates with her as he efficiently removes the many cables dangling from her head.

"Indeed. Thank you, Mr. Brown. I will see you again in two days time for the next attempt." She rises to head to the changing room and get out of the skin tight suit. The science behind the garment was originally developed for a truly immersive VR experience, but it came in quite handy for the neural link, allowing the user to feel certain physical stimuli created in the shared mental space. The ability to generate pain had been patched out of these particular models, thankfully.

Before she'd walked into Hannibal's psyche for the first time, she would have said the technology is perfectly harmless. Now she can't help but feel danger lurking every time she steps into his head.

And still, she keeps coming back.

Chapter End Notes

Brindisi - Italian for 'toast', a drinking song

pasticcio

Chapter Notes

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Will has been quietly combing through Lecter's address book, patient roster and phone records to ferret out the best people to talk to in order to get a different perspective of the man. The main revelation he gains from the process, is that Hannibal Lecter knows a shit ton of people, but likes very few. His first stop, much to his surprise, ends up being an acquaintance, perhaps tentative friend, of his own.

Alana Bloom is as lovely as the last time he'd seen her, just bumping into each other between lectures at Quantico, only enough time to exchange awkward (on his part) pleasantries (on her part).

Now they sit down across from each other in the FBI cafeteria, mugs of standard engine oil disguised as coffee before them.

"Just tell me anything that comes to mind. I know it must be hard to think back on your friendship with him now, knowing the shit he got up to in his free time, but I don't want to hear indignant posturing or disapproval. Just hit me with your true impressions, unclouded by recent revelations, if you can."

"Shit, Will, where do I even start?!" She looks so pained for a moment that he feels tempted to abort the whole endeavor. "I first met him during my internship. He was my mentor back at Johns Hopkins. He's brilliant, a brilliant surgeon and even more brilliant psychiatrist. He's always the epitome of grace and charm, polite and well spoken, even when dealing with complete assholes. Killing someone with kindness? He has that down to an art form. I just wish the murdering had stayed metaphorical."

His non-metaphorical killings were not any less artistic, Will thinks to himself, but refrains from voicing the tasteless sentiment. "Does he have any friends? I had a hard time finding anyone who isn't just a professional associate of some kind. What did he get up to outside of charities, concerts and the opera? I only know what's been in the society pages. And I regret every second I spent wading through that tripe."

"You know, *nowadays* I'm not so sure he sees *anyone* as a real friend, but I've heard him speak with true fondness of one of his fellow opera committee members - Mrs. Komeda. I think she would be a good person to talk to. I don't think there's been a single dinner party Hannibal didn't invite her to. Getting an invite to one of his elaborate feasts was seen as a badge of honor..."

"Now it's more like a curse?" He wonders at the amount of eating disorders popping up among Lecter's past dinner guests. He knows several of them are bouncing around the talkshow circuit, spreading stories, both exaggerated and made up out of whole cloth. Alana has, all things considered, taken it all with a quiet strength. No wallowing or wailing from her. Just a resigned, sad acceptance of the sordid facts.

Her brows furrow in contemplation for a moment before she continues. "As for what he does with his free time, he is the consummate renaissance man. He likes to do everything himself, loves learning new skills. Cooking is probably his favorite pastime, unfortunate connotations aside. His meals are always works of art, perfect from the taste to the presentation." Her face contorts into a moue of distaste for a moment, subtly suppressing a gag with a hand covering her lips. He remembers they even found traces of human DNA in the beer the man homebrewed specifically for Alana. "He plays the harpsichord and the theremin - the two most eccentric instruments I can think of. Even composes on them, if you can believe it. And he's talented with graphite and charcoal as well, I'm sure you've seen some of his sketches while cataloging his home and office."

He has indeed seen the man's more traditional, *bloodless*, paper based artwork. Discovering that one rendition of the *Wound Man* with Lecter's actual victim's face superimposed onto the body, was certainly a surprise. Rather cheeky. He wonders what else the man may have been hiding in plain sight. Probably laughing at all the fools too blind to see him for what he truly is, despite the many hints he kept dropping.

Lecter predominantly reproduced and adapted classical artworks, the great masters of the renaissance period, with a particular fondness for Botticelli and Caravaggio. Finding a sketchbook filled solely with meticulous studies of the Primavera keeps niggling at the back of Will's mind, a clue still percolating into epiphany. He knows Lecter had spent several years of his young adulthood in Florence. He'd probably lived or worked within walking distance of the Uffizi, a repeat visitor to the painting over many days, quietly sketching his own renditions.

"I know you're all sure he's killed a lot more people than he did as the Chesapeake Ripper, but it's really hard to imagine him just going out and grabbing another human being like you or I would grab groceries." She smoothes out the grimace that starts to twist her features and takes a fortifying sip from her mug. "I can't help but wonder if he ever would've been caught, if not for a random drunk driver T-boning him while he had a victim in his trunk."

Will is almost certain that the only other way Hannibal Lecter could've been apprehended, would've been by his own deliberate design. The grand finale of the dramatic opera of his life. A last way to feast on the reactions of an enraptured and horrified audience.

They finish their coffees and part ways again, heading to their next individual obligations.

His next person of interest has him stopping by Johns Hopkins for a chat with Dr. Donald Sutcliffe. The man isn't among the people Lecter likes, but they've known each other since their time as residents at the hospital, which makes him Lecter's oldest acquaintance within the US, if nothing else.

"Never would've suspected him of anything worse than a parking ticket, to be honest with you. He was always just so very proper. Very intent on maintaining good manners, being *polite*. I've mostly been trying to repress the knowledge of what I've been fed at his table. Not exactly something one wants to dwell on. I can't even begin to tell you the havoc eating human flesh can cause for the body. So many pathogens! And it's not like he tested the people

he butchered, is it?! I'm a neurologist, so I'm more than aware of the dangers. Had myself tested for any early signs of prion disease. You'd think a medically educated man like Hannibal would try to avoid gambling with his health like that. He always claimed he could smell sickness on people, some wild story about diagnosing someone with stomach cancer once, based on the smell of their breath. Hyperosmia, he said. Don't know how much of that I'm willing to believe."

The man seems like exactly the kind of person Lecter would take advantage of, while at the same time subtly making fun of him. Very convinced of his own importance and intellect, loves to hear himself talk. Probably didn't end up as gourmet meatballs solely because the connection to Lecter is too close. There's a slimy, opportunistic aura to Sutcliffe. Will wants a shower after just talking to him for a few minutes.

"Anything more personal you could tell me about him? Not gossip, I'm not interested in that."

"Well. He's originally from Lithuania, of all places. Went to boarding school in Paris for a while before attending medical school in Florence. The man is an insufferable polyglot. Even speaks Japanese. Not sure how helpful any of that is." He shrugs nonchalantly, attention divided between his phone and a leatherbound appointment book.

It's not helpful at all. Sutcliffe is a useless source, too concerned with himself to properly notice other people, even his betters.

And for all his murderous, cannibalistic faults, Lecter *is* his better, several times over.

Will's farewell only yields a distracted grunt in reply. Hopefully Mrs. Komeda will have more pertinent things to impart.

"Thanks for talking to me on such short notice, especially considering the subject matter."

"Don't worry, my dear. I'd rather talk to a sensible lad like yourself, trying to actually get to the bottom of things, than any of the nosy reporters that have been sniffing around. Those vultures just want sensational garbage." Mrs. Evelyn Komeda is a stately dame in her 60s, thin and long necked like a heron, with a stylish bobcut, but appearing much larger than her diminutive size, thanks to both her loud personality and elaborate choice of fashion. She'd opened the door wearing a dark green velvet cocktail dress, a gauzy black wrap dotted with sparkling rhinestones draped rakishly across her shoulders.

They move into a beautifully furnished parlour, a certain victorian flair to the place Will is sure Lecter would appreciate. Maybe they have the same interior decorator. He's served an aromatic cup of tea by an actual honest-to-god maid and fears touching anything, lest he leave dog hair on the beautiful antique couch she ushers him to sit on.

"The first thing you need to know about Hannibal Lecter, is that he is a complete bastard with a teenager's sense of humor. Bless his heart, but looking back now, the amount of cannibal related wordplay he infused into conversation is outright juvenile. I guess I can't fully blame

him, he must've had a blast rubbing it into everyone's faces. *Nothing here is vegetarian!* he once started a dinner with, that absolute scoundrel."

Will feels oddly vindicated that he'd already pegged that about Lecter. Underneath all that pompous presentation the man is a prankster of a sort. "You don't seem overly traumatized." He can't stop himself from saying. He genuinely likes her, which, with her being a rich high society lady, is akin to meeting a unicorn. But there's something very authentic about her. No masks put on, no airs of superiority. Lecter probably enjoyed pitting her against the more stuck up of his acquaintances, watching them squirm, with embarrassment or confusion or outrage. Mrs. Komeda is probably the life of any party she's invited to.

"I'm too old to be traumatized by a little cannibalism. Everything that man cooked tasted amazing and I refuse to feel bad about something I didn't know. I hear we share 98% of our DNA with pigs. And they called it *long pig* before that was common knowledge. I certainly never could tell the difference." She takes a dignified sip from her dainty porcelain cup, head tilted in reminiscence. "He was very good at insulting people straight to their faces and they'd never even notice. Why, one of the most frequent things he'd say was *I'd love to have you for dinner!* Can you imagine?! What an absolute riot, that man!" A surprisingly hearty cackle spills from her lips and Will can't stop himself from joining her infectious hilarity.

"He sounds like a real character. You're the first person who hasn't just given me trite facts - equal parts admiration and condemnation."

"I'm not surprised. Hannibal can be very intimidating. And I don't mean in a physical way, though he hides a rather toned body under all those ludicrous suits. He and I frequent the same fitness club, you see. No, what I mean is, intellectually. That man's mind is a steel trap. He can recall conversations from years ago, verbatim. You can't get away with any fibs about past embarrassments with him. He takes great delight in correcting false accounts. The worse the liar looks as a result, the better. Guess we should've pegged him as a sadist much sooner, eh?"

She regales him with a few more humorous anecdotes of Lecter making rich assholes look like buffoons - a pastime he can easily appreciate - before she has to excuse herself to attend to another social engagement.

He's alarmed to catch himself thinking that he would've enjoyed seeing Lecter in his element, hosting a dinner, all his digs and jokes going over the self-absorbed, self-important heads of his stuffy guests, while they feast on the flesh of one of their own, effusively praising the talented chef.

He wonders if Du Maurier was ever allowed to see that side of him. He doesn't think it's part of the *person suit*, as she'd called it. No, the ridiculous humor is a core part of the true Hannibal Lecter, Will is sure. Du Maurier was to Lecter just an audience of one, to test his pageantry of normality on, not show his true self.

He might just have to talk to her as well. In a more private setting, away from Jack's bullheadedness and moral sensibilities. She seems smart and perceptive and he wouldn't be surprised if she's seen much further behind the curtain of Lecter's public performance than the man is aware of.

Chapter End Notes

Pasticcio - an opera that is composed by different people who may or may not have been working together, or alternately an adaptation of a work that is in some way inauthentic

act II - ritornello

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

"Will! There's a situation at the neural link research center!"

Jack Crawford storms through his door with all the righteous fury of an avenging angel. It's getting dark outside, the tiny window in his broom closet of an office showing a rectangle of purplish twilight. He was just about ready to pack up and head home, but Jack's ire carries all the promise of a long sleepless night. Will preemptively grabs his phone, already pulling up the contact for his dog-sitter.

"They need your help! Dr. Du Maurier went back in for another session today, but she didn't wake up when the system initiated the exit procedure. They've been trying to get her out for hours already, without success."

"What exactly is it that you think *I* can do that the techs can't?" Will asks with a tired sort of acceptance. He knows from long, frustrating experience that Jack's dictionary does not contain the word *no*.

At least the man stops shouting in favor of badgering Will for his assistance. Jack truly has no concept of an indoor voice. Will eyes the family sized container of aspirin on his desk with weary consideration.

"Because of your unique skillset you're the best option we have to go in after her, help her disengage."

Will buries his aching head in his hands, vigorously rubbing at his face. Maybe if he does it hard enough he can scour himself right out of existence by sheer force of friction. "You really think sending me in after her is a good idea? My memory is quite excellent, Jack. I haven't forgotten the leery looks you threw my way for *weeks* after Chilton published his little exposé on me. *With a mind so prone to reflection, is it really a good idea to have him reflect - day in, day out - the worst humanity has to offer?*" Will does a passable imitation of Chilton's unctuous, smarmy delivery.

There's a sly glint in Jack's eyes now and Will has the good sense to dread what he'll say next. "The only other option would be to send in Dr. Bloom."

Fuck. Of course.

Jack has never encountered an obstacle he couldn't overcome. He's the fucking Rube Goldberg of rule bending, when it suits him. If brute force intimidation doesn't work, pulling the emotional strings of his opponent is fair game. The man knows damn well that Will would never countenance exposing Alana to this kind of risk.

"You'll *owe* me, Jack. You know what this job does to me. And your guilt tripping doesn't help, so don't even start. Let's just go and get this over with. And for the record? I hate this and think it's a disastrous idea. I'm not looking forward to being able to say *I told you so*." Will packs his satchel and swallows two aspirin dry, resigned to the next few hours being a grueling mess that will end up increasing the frequency of his nightmares.

He studiously ignores the part of his brain that immediately perks up with interest at the opportunity to see the inside of Hannibal Lecter's mind for himself. He feels like his fascination with the man conjured his current predicament in an especially cynical manifestation of Murphy's Law.

"You just lie back, close your eyes and the neural link will do the rest!" Nurse Brown is way more excited than the situation warrants. The guy is clearly the sort of person that sees these kinds of tricky setbacks as an opportunity for further study rather than an unfolding tragedy.

The skintight bodysuit is kind of embarrassing, leaving none of the contours of his body to the imagination and he's already caught Mr. Brown eyeing his ass and crotch with undisguised appreciation.

Will settles down on the indicated bunk, the third in a row. The one furthest away from him is occupied by the motionless shape of Hannibal Lecter, dressed in his own indecent looking wrap of high-tech engineering, the scene even more bizarre thanks to the addition of the beeping and thrumming medical equipment keeping him alive. In the middle, Du Maurier lies, looking like she's just taking a restful nap in the world's weirdest fetish gear. And now he'll join their ranks, another unconscious body hooked up in communion with Lecter's psyche. Not the kind of threesome he'd have ever wished to join.

He tries his best to find a comfortable position on the hard surface of the cot, his arms rearranged by Nurse Brown to lie flat by his sides. He's hooked up to more cables and electrodes than seems feasible to fit on his head, the sheer mass of all that rubber and metal weighing it down uncomfortably. Brown gives him a wink and a few presumptuous, indecent pats on his upper thigh, before bustling back into the monitoring room. If Will strains his neck he can see Jack pacing a furrow into the floor behind the large glass window overlooking the treatment room.

Brown's voice crackles over the loudspeakers, causing Will to flinch as he's jerked out of his woolgathering. "Now just close your eyes. Count backwards from sixty when I indicate and go through all your muscles, feet to face, and consciously try to relax their tension. Ready? Start counting in three, two, one, go!"

Will follows the instructions as best he can, but has a hard time relaxing so much as his toes, his whole body buzzing with anxious energy. He almost forgets to count, so preoccupied with the painful knot of tension he can already feel forming between his shoulders. His stumbling countdown reaches sixteen when, from one moment to the next, the darkness behind his eyes is replaced by the breathtaking rooftop view of a rustic mediterranean city scape, sunset painting the surrounding buildings gold and red and everything in between. There's a soft breeze rustling his hair and the scent of wild flowers saturates the air, more intense and

aromatic than he's ever smelled it before, even when walking the dogs in the untouched wilderness behind his home. He finds himself clad in a casual white cotton suit, unlike anything he's ever owned. The material loose and comfortable, but still stylishly cut.

It's alarmingly easy to forget all about his real body, lying stiff and still under the watchful eyes of the neural link technicians.

"Hello, and who might you be, gracing me with such a delightfully unexpected visit?" A softly accented voice sounds out from behind him.

Will whirls around and lays eyes on Hannibal Lecter for the first time, outside of photographs or the recent sight of him in his sickbed, hooked up to machines. The man is wearing an incongruous ensemble of colors and patterns and somehow makes it work. He looks elegantly refined in a three piece suit, a bold teal paisley patterning the material of the waistcoat, tie and pocket square, the windowpane suit in a pastel salmon shade a stark contrast. How the man manages to pull off looking suave instead of clownish, Will can't begin to fathom. Lecter holds out a longfingered hand to shake and Will automatically acquiesces to the polite gesture, the palm feeling warm and slightly calloused in his own.

"Will Graham. I'm with the FBI. I'd say it's nice to meet you, but this is not that kind of get-together. I'm here because Dr. Du Maurier never woke up after your last session."

A subtly distressed expression manifests on Lecter's face. Will has a feeling the man is always in perfect control of his features. He won't be so naive as to just believe whatever he's being shown in terms of emotions. Lecter's face is just another canvas to paint onto whatever picture he wants to show the world. "From my perspective, Bedelia left just as she always does after our session ended. While I cannot be sure of the time of day outside at any given moment unless told, as I'm sure you understand, the time elapsed from her entry to her exit was the prescribed hour, as far as I can tell. From what I've been given to understand, a longer immersion is not recommended."

Du Maurier deciding to impart that particular morsel of information to Lecter makes Will feel tempted to retract his estimation of her intelligence somewhat. Why lay out irresistible bait like that for a sadist with insatiable curiosity?

Lecter gestures for Will to walk with him and they descend a narrow set of stairs off the flat roof to meander along empty streets. A lively piece of music is drifting on the air, like it's emanating out of the open window of someone's home.

"I'm unsure how I can help with this conundrum, but I will be happy to try. As the saying goes - *I have nothing but time*. But please, indulge me for a moment. Are you *the* Will Graham, of the infamous empathy disorder? I would be lying if I said your case isn't fascinating to me. A professional hazard, you might say."

"Fucking psychiatrists." Will grumbles. The teasing twinkle in Lecter's eyes takes some of the sting out of his curiosity. He's clearly fishing for a reaction, but makes no secret out of it. "If every shrink who wanted to poke around in my mind were to pay me ten dollars, I could retire in the caribbean and just spend the rest of my days fishing and working on my tan."

"You could use a bit of sun. While your pale complexion is quite lovely, I have no doubt that you would look even more striking with your skin sun-kissed and your lovely curls streaked with sea salt." And *damn*, if Will doesn't feel a blush rising to his cheeks. When he'd been told that Lecter is charming, he'd never expected him to be this unapologetically flirtatious.

It doesn't help that the man looks like a marble statue come to life - that angular face with its arresting cheekbones and deepset eyes, the wide shoulders and narrow hips. The devil wears ridiculous bespoke suits and is far too beguiling for Will's peace of mind.

"Why haven't you given Dr. Du Maurier any of the information she's been asking for yet, anyways? From what I understand the chances of you ever waking up from your coma are pretty slim and it's not like you really care, whether people know or not. If you talk to us, you can at least have your own account be heard." Personally, Will thinks Lecter just enjoys seeing people squirm. Law enforcement going to the trouble of entering his comatose mind just for a chance to pick his brains must be rather flattering to his ego.

"Ah, but once I tell, the game is over. And I do so love to play." His maroon eyes sparkle merrily at Will, who tries very hard to remind himself, that this is a dangerous predator walking beside him.

Their wanderings lead them to a beautiful building, some greco-roman style palace, doric columns forming a shadowy colonade around a courtyard they traverse. Past the entrance, the inside is resplendent with shining marble floors and frescoed ceilings, beautiful paintings and statues adorning the walls. Their steps echo pleasantly in the spacious halls, with Lecter expounding upon this or that exhibit, little quirky anecdotes and historical facts. His enthusiasm and clear adoration for the artworks captivating and contagious.

Will almost feels regretful at the thought of leaving once his hour is up. He's never even left the US, and this feels like the kind of vacation he could never hope to afford.

He almost immediately chastises himself for these thoughts, for how easily Lecter's charisma and good humor had drawn him in. How they made him forget about why he is here in the first place. He has a feeling Du Maurier is still here, hidden somewhere in one of the endless rooms of Lecter's intricate construction. Trapped, or just lost? He can't be sure.

He was right to feel anxious about this meeting, their conversation flows so easily, far too comfortably, Lecter never batting an eye at Will's more morbid interjections. In fact he looks absolutely delighted every time Will voices another macabre thought.

"Do you keep exact remembrances of your Ripper tableaux in a similar museum setup?"

"What a marvelous idea, Will. I shall have to give it some serious thought. I rather like to keep them *in situ*, as it were. Preserve the authentic, holistic presentation."

They eventually stop in front of a painting that Will has, by now, become all too familiar with.

The Primavera seems to shine with an inner light where it hangs on the wall, its intricacies just as lovingly and meticulously remembered as graphite and charcoal had previously

rendered them in sketch after zealous sketch. Lecter's ability to recall detail is truly something else.

"This piece holds a particularly influential place in my heart. I'm sure the FBI has found my studies of it in their ransacking of my home. Botticelli had a way of capturing a subtle beauty in his figures, a realism softened by a loving eye. His work suffused with meaning and symbolism. I have always been enamored with the figure of Zephyrus, tempestuous in his pursuit of Chloris. Though he resides at the outer edge of the canvas, his passion is no less important."

Will feels the buzzing sensation in his brainstem that indicates their session has come to an end.

"His ardor for Chloris transformed her, elevated her, and through their coupling she became the goddess Flora, forever presiding over fertility and growth."

The buzzing now filling his head, Will suddenly finds himself resting against a flat plane, his body posed to hover over two female figures next to him, his naked form only loosely wrapped in a billowing cloth. Hannibal, gazing up at the scene from below, has his admiring gaze fixed on Will, his eyes roaming over the exposed planes of his skin.

"You make a stunning Zephyrus, Will. How I wish to see those curls shine, illuminated by the real sun casting golden highlights on their windswept beauty."

Will realizes, in the moments before he is pulled out of the connection, that the two women he's hovering above aren't mannequins, nor are they alive. Their skin the lifeless grey of day old death, eyes cloudy and staring sightlessly, dressed and arranged to resemble Chloris and Flora by the artist's cruel, loving hand.

He opens his eyes once again to see the treatment room, ears humming with the electronic white noise all around him.

Epiphany replaces that niggling feeling of familiarity he'd had, when first looking at Lecter's sketchbook filled with his obsessive studies of the Primavera.

Chapter End Notes

Ritornello - 'little return', is a recurring passage of music for Orchestra and chorus

Reuben 'Rube' Goldberg - american cartoonist most famous for his illustrations of intricate, convoluted machines performing mundane and even nonsensical tasks

Murphy's Law - everything that can go wrong, will go wrong

In situ - in its original place

intermezzo

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The first thing Will does after sitting up, is try to rip off the mess of several pounds of electronics that's shackling him to the cot.

"Woah, woah! Easy there, Mr. Graham! Here, I've got you." Nurse Brown hurries to his side and eagerly helps with the removal.

Jack stomps straight after Will into the changing area. He has the decency to turn around and grant Will some modicum of privacy while he peels himself out of the skintight suit, but nevertheless immediately starts his interrogation. "What happened?! Du Maurier didn't regain consciousness, so I can only assume you didn't have any luck locating her."

"If she's really still in there with Lecter, he's hiding her well. Well enough she probably can't tell she's even in his mind anymore. If I didn't know you'd never met the guy, Jack, I'd be doubting right now that I'm actually awake myself. His imagination and recall are insanely detailed. If not for the intentional idiosyncrasies of the scenery he created for our meeting, it would've been near indistinguishable from reality. And he has a lot more control over my own avatar inside his mind than I'm honestly comfortable with."

That last admiring, covetous gaze of Lecter's still makes Will's pulse race. And not entirely with apprehension. He feels near feverish, remembering the way those dark eyes, appreciative and desirous, had lingered on his half-naked form, enthroned in a place of honor as part of Lecter's favorite painting.

"Well, this sucks, but they'll keep monitoring her for now. You can make another attempt tomorrow." Jack is sporting the stony expression common to when he plays unstoppable force. But in this, the science and the research center's team of technicians will, thankfully, be the immovable object shielding Will.

"No, Jack. It's not going to happen, at least not tomorrow. Because there's rather specific safety precautions that *I'll* be following and *you* won't question, if you want me to do this again. I'll go back in the day after tomorrow. End of debate."

Jack huffs a grumbling sigh, as if the rules were set up solely to inconvenience him and stomps back out of the room with the barest farewell of "See you at work."

Tomorrow, Will is going to make use of the FBI's vast resources to place a few urgent international phone calls. To follow up on the spark of realization that had ignited his brain with sudden associations falling into place. In those last few moments, as he was incorporated into Lecter's murderous, artistic recreation of the Primavera, he'd finally recalled some of his old research.

Getting the most qualified person within the Italian polizia on the phone takes some effort and way too much time spent listening to tinny music over Quantico's landline.

Eventually, after much haggling and persuading and constantly being handed off to whoever speaks the most fluent English, he has Inspector Rinaldo Pazzi on the line.

"Good day, signore. What can I do for the fine people at the FBI?" The man sounds both dubious and bored.

"Hello, Inspector. My name is Will Graham. I work with the Behavioral Analysis Unit of the FBI and am calling in relation to a current investigation. It's all a bit convoluted, so let me just get to the most important point. Did you ever investigate - some 30 years ago, in or around Florence - a man named Hannibal Lecter?"

The change in the man's demeanor at the mention of Lecter's name is quite remarkable. A quiet seething anger now infuses his voice, making it hiss through the earpiece like an overboiling kettle.

"That miserable *figlio di puttana*! Oh, I know him well! Please tell me you caught him! That he finally slipped up! No one would believe me when I investigated him - such a smart, well-mannered young man, he would not hurt a fly. Bah! I insisted on his guilt. The man arrested for *il mostro*'s crimes was gift wrapped for us, *meticolosamente*, *ma conosco i miei polli*, how do you say - I knew right away it was a sham. Too easy, too perfect, and Lecter so calm, so smug. His scapegoat was a simple brute of a butcher, a man of no refinement. He lacked the education and creativity that was present in every crimescene. But my superiors would not hear about it. Nearly demoted me over my insistence."

"He recreated classical paintings with corpses, didn't he? I only know of the case, because I focus specifically on investigating serial killers with elaborate signatures and unusual *modus operandi*. Took me a while to remember the case and make the connection."

"Si, signore Graham, he was *obsessed* with Botticelli's Primavera. I lost count of the times I found him sitting in the Uffizi, on the bench in front of the painting, filling page after page with sketches of it. It is how I identified him. Unfortunately, it was not enough to have him properly looked at. It remains my greatest regret, that I did not succeed in bringing him to justice."

Will thinks Pazzi sounds rather obsessed himself, but he can also easily imagine the frustration, of knowing you have the right suspect and no one believing you due to a lack of concrete evidence. Or, as the case may be, a lot of evidence conveniently pointing in the opposite direction. "Well, I have a bit of good news for you, at least. Lecter recently ended up in a coma due to a car accident and the fact that he had a corpse in his trunk at the time clearly warranted a closer look. When his home got searched, we discovered an actual murder basement, not to mention evidence that he's been eating parts of his kills. We've been able to link him back to several of the victims previously assigned to the Chesapeake Ripper."

"Ahhh, *colto con la mani en sacco*!" Pazzi sighs out rapturously. "I thank you for your phone call, signore Graham. You can not imagine how much it means to me to know that *il mostro di Firenze* has finally been caught and the mystery of the missing organs solved. If you give

me a fax or email address, I will forward everything I have of the original investigation. I would be grateful, if you would return the favor and forward your own. It may be petty of me, but having my old convictions vindicated, even if late by a few decades, is too fine an opportunity."

They exchange the necessary contact information and part with amicable farewells.

It's always nice when a hunch bears out.

Will spends the rest of his afternoon compiling the files for Pazzi. The alert from his inbox announcing the arrival of the detective's own records is a welcome reprieve from worrying about tomorrow's return trip into Lecter's head and the ~~excitement~~ dread he feels at their looming reunion.

He spends his afternoon ~~admiring~~ examining the ~~stunning~~ macabre scenes a young Hannibal Lecter had built to express his love of art and beauty.

Chapter End Notes

Intermezzo - a composition that fits between the acts of a play or movements of a larger musical work

Figlio di puttana - son of a bitch/whore

Il mostro (di Firenze) - the monster of Florence

Meticolosamente - meticulously

(Ma) conosco I miei polli - '(but) I know my chickens', knowing someone or something well enough to predict

Colto con la mani en sacco - 'caught with his hand in the sack', being caught red-handed

act III - duodrama

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

It's easier this time around - the electrodes, the cables, the ridiculous clingy suit - though Will still feels unable to relax, even if half his nerves aren't the result of dread but anticipation.

On his second excursion into Hannibal Lecter's mind palace, Will is greeted by an opulent, high-ceilinged room, crystal chandeliers sparkling above him and checkered marble under his feet, echoing with every step. There's an orchestra playing Beethoven's Eroica somewhere out of sight, well-dressed strangers bustling all around him, paying no attention to him.

Looking over the sea of people, he swears he catches an occasional glimpse of a familiar face - Alana, Chilton of all people, and there, was that a flash of Du Maurier's light blonde hair?

He feels a bit like he's stepped into a fairy tale and when he notices his attire, a flattering midnight blue tuxedo, he feels hilariously reminded of the ballroom scene in Labyrinth. He wonders what Beverly will say, when he tells her about comparing America's most notorious serial killer to the goblin king. That's probably not what she expected when she brought the flick to FBI-minion-movie-night.

Now where is his mischievous murderous host hiding?

Will decides, whatever game Lecter is playing right now, he'll have to change the rules.

He winds his way past the crowd, out of the ballroom, down a wide staircase, through door after door, hall after parlor after courtyard. His surroundings become more twisted, more an amalgamation of different styles of architecture and decoration, the longer he walks, the deeper he goes.

He doubts Lecter is unaware of his wandering, but he continues to stay out of sight, letting Will roam around unimpeded for now.

A corridor covered in pictures of birds catches his attention and he follows its winding path to the painting of *Leda and the Swan* he knows hangs in Lecter's dining room. This reproduction is much larger though, the frame spanning nearly the whole distance from floor to ceiling and on an inexplicable hunch, he grasps a hold of the ornate golden frame and *pulls*.

The painting swings open like a door and he has the sudden, vivid, mental image of Lecter looking down on his progress with interest - the cunning rat traversing his maze - rewarding his ingenuity with delighted applause.

Behind the painting he discovers a moodily lit dining room, long table set for three. The centerpiece is a sumptuous feast of kalua pork steaming on a silver serving plate, the leaf-wrapped roast in question suspiciously leg-shaped. And at the head of the table, a slice of

meat on the plate before her, sits Bedelia Du Maurier. She's wearing an elegant evening dress with a plunging neckline, body stiff and gaze vacant. And as he crosses the distance to reach her side, he sees that her legs have been amputated just below the knee.

"Dr. Du Maurier? Can you hear me?" Will tentatively touches her shoulder, giving it a little shake. Her head bobbles disturbingly, like a marionette's strings are keeping her upright, but all the life has been drained from her body.

He vaguely recalls some mandatory workshop from years past on how to deal with people having a dissociative episode or a panic attack. Not exactly comparable, but it'll just have to do.

He puts his hand on the back of her neck, exerting some noticeable pressure to hopefully ground her with the sensation and speaks directly into her ear in a calm and steady voice. "Your name is Bedelia Du Maurier. You live in Baltimore, Maryland. You are a psychiatrist. You took part in experimental therapeutic treatments using neural link technology. You entered the mind of Hannibal Lecter. You are *still* inside the mind of Hannibal Lecter. He cannot harm you in this mental space. Whatever he did to you, whatever he told you, is a lie, a fabrication. He did not cut off your legs. I saw your unconscious body not quite an hour ago, both legs still attached, lying on a cot in the neural link treatment room."

At first there's no reaction, she doesn't even blink. But the longer he talks, the more awareness seems to flood back into her body, a flush returning to her pale cheeks, pupils first expanding then contracting again, before she takes a shuddering breath and lurches in her seat, as if startled from a nightmare.

In a way, she had been.

She trembles, but looking down at her lap, she grabs at the gauze wrapping the stumps of her legs, ripping it off with alacrity. And instead of stitches and inflamed skin, her legs are suddenly restored, whole and healthy.

She grips Will's hands with surprising strength, whole body still shaking with relief and adrenaline. "Thank you. I can never repay you for this. Please, be careful! I thought myself so smart, so wise to his games and manipulations, but he still managed to fool me. Don't let him win! If you aren't careful, he can -" Before she's able to finish her sentence she winks out of existence. He just hopes it's due to her waking up, not getting whisked away to some other dark corner in the goblin king's castle.

As if the man had been privy to Will's earlier thoughts, Lecter steps out of the shadows, clad in his own black tuxedo, softly clapping a little applause. "Excellent performance, dear Will. But I did not expect anything less from you. I'm beyond delighted to have you back here with me. Trading Bedelia for your handsome presence is rather the opposite of a loss."

Will can feel the telltale buzz start up in his head, announcing his imminent departure. Meanwhile, Lecter hasn't stopped in his approach and they're now almost close enough for their chests to touch. Will's pulse quickens to a staccato beat and, mental construct or not, he can also distinctly feel his blood rushing south, an erection beginning to strain against the tight fit of his dress pants.

He's given no time to feel regretful at the premature end to their second and probably last encounter, when Lecter leans forward to press a kiss to his lips, the sparks of arousal and desire firing off in Will's brain completely overpowering the thrumming of the neural link disengaging.

It's like the floodgates have been opened and he's near climbing into Lecter's, no *Hannibal's* lap in his mounting eagerness, their hard cocks rubbing against each other with teasing, torturous friction.

If this is the last time he sees the man, he's going to make it count.

There's more teeth than tongue involved in this wild exploration of lips and mouths and soon necks and chests. Sharp incisors tug at arousal-hardened nipples and fingers pull at thick greying chest hair to elicit gasps and whimpers, as their clothes vanish with but a thought.

There's a taste of copper on Will's tongue, both of their lips shiny with blood and saliva, but he feels no pain, no wound to indicate its source.

Hannibal lays him out on the dining table and enthusiastically buries his head between Will's thighs. The symbolism isn't lost on Will, making him choke on an incredulous laugh.

The rapturous moans Hannibal makes while swallowing Will's turgid length, tip to root without gagging, vibrate against the flushed sensitive skin. Will buries his hands in the fine strands of Hannibal's hair, sharply yanking his head closer, until his nose is pressed flat into his pubic hair. There's teeth scraping against the vein on the underside and tugging at the frenulum on the upstroke, but it only excites and arouses him more, hips bucking violently to shove himself deeper down into the tight heat of Hannibal's throat.

The man takes Will's offering without flinching, eyes closed in bliss, one hand pressing bruises into his thighs, the other busy rolling and tugging his tightening balls. Will fucks himself to a blinding orgasm inside the hot mouth with a few more sharp thrusts, heedless of any discomfort his brutal pace may cause, finally finishing with a bellowing shout.

"*Fuck*, Hannibal, that was absolutely mind-blowing. I can see now why this tech is so popular for VR." Will gasps out on a breathless laugh, that quickly changes into a whine as Hannibal slowly lets Will's cock slip back out from between his lips, tenderly cleaning the oversensitive flesh with his tongue.

He's a bit disappointed with how fast he came, which is when he remembers, that despite the very realistic sensations, this is all make belief.

And there's no refractory period in fantasyland.

His erection recovers it's full girth with comical speed at this mental recalibration, teasing a delighted laugh from Hannibal. "My, aren't you quick on the uptake, my dear! I only wish I knew what your seed truly tastes like. As it is, I had to substitute."

"Oh? What's my flavor then, in here?"

"A fine 2003 Dom Pérignon. It seemed apt to celebrate."

"You're ridiculous. Come here." Will pulls Hannibal up onto the table with him and has him lie down on his back. He proceeds to straddle his lap, the sensation of their naked cocks rubbing together firing off sparks behind his eyes.

Spitting into his hand to wet Hannibal's straining erection, he decides to experiment a little with the possibilities, sinking directly down onto the hard length, willing his constructed body to accommodate the stretch without lube or preparation. He does imagine a little bit of pain though, the mostly dry friction pulling harshly at the sphincter, but it only enhances the pleasure as he bottoms out, burying Hannibal inside himself to the very root.

"Ah, Will, *mylimasis, imk viska, suvalgyk mane!* Yes, yes, use me, take your pleasure from my body!" Hannibal's fingers dig painfully into his hips, the nails boring little red crescents in the skin as Will starts to move, slowly increasing his speed, the blunt tip of Hannibal's cock hitting his prostate with every downward thrust. His own erection bobs obscenely with his movements, every downstroke smacking the wet crown against Hannibal's stomach.

"*Tu esi grožio ir tobulumo įsikūnijimas, smurtą ir malonę!* You're magnificent, my love. My only regret is that we will never get to experience this outside of this ephemeral place!" Hannibal pants, his hips pistoning up to meet Will's thrusts, the wet sound of their skin slapping together filling the room.

"Is this how you got Du Maurier trapped? Because I notice the neural link stopped buzzing and I'm still here." Will grunts, and despite the rather dire topic, his movements do not slow but only get wilder, more uncoordinated, as he chases another orgasm.

"No, *never!* I have wanted to meet you for a rather long time, my love. I'd only just attended your presentation at the forensic psychology conference three weeks before my unfortunate accident, you know? I'd been hoping to find an excuse to meet you for a few years already. When Bedelia mentioned you as part of the team investigating me, I knew I had to take my chance, and hope they would assign her rescue to you."

"Why, Dr. Lecter, serial murder *and* stalking? How naughty! You're still far too verbose, we should change that!" The end of the sentence devolves into a deep drawn-out groan of satisfaction as orgasm takes Will for the second time in under thirty minutes, his come painting sticky streaks into Hannibal's chest hair.

He keeps up the brutal pace of his thrusts, pummeling his aching prostate, drawing out the bliss and mounting pain of overstimulation. Hannibal does indeed stop talking in favor of shouting out his own climax as he finishes inside Will shortly after.

They lean close in the exhausted aftermath, to share deep slow kisses, tongues tangling lazily, now their ardor is somewhat calmed.

"So, what now? You gonna trap me in here forever or until they decide to pull the plug on your ventilator?" Will murmurs against kiss-swollen lips.

"Must you ruin the mood like this? But no, *mylimasis*. I'm well aware this isn't sustainable. Please, let me taste you, just once more, before we part."

Hannibal slips out of him, flips him over onto his stomach and goes on to give him the filthiest, most intense rimjob he's ever received. Licking and caressing his hole like he's still kissing Will's lips, tongue digging past the tight muscle. The room is filled with the sounds of his rapt enjoyment. Will can only muster a keening whimper at the onslaught, fingernails raking uselessly at the smooth tabletop.

Hannibal wrings another orgasm from him, purely from his zealous tongue-fucking. When Will flops around limply to grab for Hannibal's cock and return the favor, he finds him already spent. The pleasure he got from eating Will out enough to prompt his own untouched release.

"Thank you, my love. I'm not sure if we will be able to enjoy this kind of intimacy again, so I will treasure this memory forever. Unfortunately, it's time for us to part now. And I beg of you - do not hesitate to defend yourself."

"Wait, what? What do you mean *defend myself*?! Hannibal?!"

But Hannibal has slipped off the table and is backing into the shadows, his form melting away until Will is left alone in the room.

He soon becomes aware of a distant noise, a rhythmic click-clack, against hard marble floors.

He rises to investigate, stepping out past the painting again. When he turns his head in the direction of the sound, he sees a great feathered beast approaching with heavy, ponderous steps. It is no bird though, but a stag, covered in a raven's plumage, its velvety muzzle slightly parted to scent the air for prey, vicious fangs glinting behind soft lips. When it spots Will with its hellish red eyes, it utters a great bellow that seems to shake the walls with its resonance. And it lowers its sharp deadly antlers, the steady click-clack of its hooves becoming a frenzied drumroll as it accelerates into a mad gallop towards him.

And Will? He forgets everything he only just recently told Du Maurier - that this isn't real and nothing can truly hurt him here.

Will *runs*.

Chapter End Notes

Duodrama - theatrical melodrama for two actors, in which speech is accompanied by music for dramatic effect

Mylimasis, imk viską, suvalgyk mane - Beloved, take everything, eat me up

Tu esi grožio ir tobulumo įsikūnijimas, smurtą ir malonę - You are the embodiment of beauty and perfection, violence and grace

a grand finale

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Will runs, stumbling across ornate rugs and slipping on polished tiles, shoulders bumping into doorframes and hips collecting bruises from narrow turns around banisters.

And all throughout his frenzied flight, the stag keeps up its unrelenting pursuit, with the inevitability of a natural disaster. Fitting its enormous body even through narrow passages and up ladders, though Will doesn't look back to ascertain how it manages such. Its bellowing cry and stampeding hooves the frantic soundtrack to its hunt.

He has the odd feeling that it is herding him somewhere, some specific destination in Hannibal's psyche. Though for what purpose, he can't say.

He stumbles into a courtyard, a beautiful snake mosaic covering the expanse, overshadowed by the looming silhouette of a medieval castle. The great wooden gates to the keep yawn open in welcome before him, his only way forward.

And suddenly, Hannibal's disembodied voice rings out across the sky, echoing and resonant, as if God himself were speaking from up high. "My love, you need to **fight**! Become the hunter! You are not prey, Will! Use the savage instincts I know are slumbering inside you!"

His mad dash inside the fortress eventually leads him to an armory, filled with all manner of savage weaponry. Spoiled for choice, he dithers, almost too long, the stag barreling into the room behind him, blocking his escape route.

Hands flailing about as he presses himself into the far wall, he fumbles for a hold on some blade or club, as the creature prepares for attack. Sparks fly with a screech as its sharp hooves paw at the rough stone floor.

With a last echoing roar, it lowers its head, deadly horned crown pointed at Will and thunders towards him, mouth foaming and red eyes rolling with madness.

Will's hand closes around the slim length of some lance or spear and he swings it off the wall and into the path of the raging beast with a desperate yell.

The pointed tip of the pike sinks into the heaving feathered chest as the stag impales itself upon it with its own momentum, the sharp tips of its antlers coming to rest a mere breath from Will's face.

The monstrous animal collapses to the floor with a grunting sigh, blood spurting in large gushes from the mortal wound, as Will sinks to his own knees, legs shaking with adrenaline and the relief of having escaped injury or death.

As the fog of his fear starts to clear, his mind recognizes his folly. The realization of the situation's surreality sets in, of him succumbing to his terror at an imaginary threat. But before he can truly begin to chastise himself for surrendering his logical thinking to base instinctual responses, the dying beast starts to melt, to transform.

And within moments, it is not the stag anymore, lying in a growing pool of its own blood, but *Hannibal*. Impaled and bleeding out, the spear penetrating his body just above his clavicle and exiting again at his lower back.

"Nononono! Hannibal, what the *fuck*?!" Will's unsteady hands reach for the wounds, trying to stem the bleeding, but there's so much blood already, the injury seemingly fatal. *Can* it be fatal? In Hannibal's own mind?

Will's trembling hand is intercepted and held by Hannibal's own, far steadier grip, stroking Will's knuckles in a bizarre show of comfort, despite being the one in clear pain.

"You did so well, my darling. I knew you could do it. It is a great pleasure, to die at the hands of one's beloved."

And Hannibal Lecter presses one last kiss to Will's palm, before closing his eyes, a beatific smile on his face, and in between blinks -

- Will's perspective drastically changes, as he's suddenly looking up at the bland beige ceiling of the neural link center's treatment room once more, the shrill drawn out beep of a flat-lining heart monitor assaulting his ears, as chaos erupts around him.

He's still sitting on the cot an hour later, head empty of thoughts, unable to process. Nurse Brown eventually herds him into the changing room and starts to help him out of the suit like he's undressing a tired toddler. Will can't even muster the wherewithal to feel ashamed or embarrassed at his nakedness nor the dried come coating the inside of the garment's crotch.

He let's himself be bundled into a shock blanket, someone pressing a paper cup of bitter coffee into his hands. There are people trying to talk to him for a while. He vaguely recognizes Jack and Dr. Du Maurier among those attempting to snap him out of his fugue state.

But the only thing on his mind is Hannibal's adoring, worshipful gaze as he breathed his last, apparently perfectly capable of arranging his own murder from inside his mind, with purely imaginary weapons.

The staff's efforts at resuscitation are all for naught, Hannibal never regaining a heartbeat. He had died and taken all his macabre secrets with him, leaving Will to silently mourn the shortest, most intense relationship of his life.

He manages to rouse himself enough to dress in his rumpled clothes, ignoring all of Jack's badgering, barely listening to the technicians' warnings about closely monitoring his health for the next month.

He just wants to go home, hug his dogs and maybe cry a little for missed chances.

Hannibal Lecter may not have deserved love if his worthiness were measured by all his misdeeds, but Will may just have fallen in love with him anyways.

Just his luck, that the one guy he feels not just physical attraction for, but also an immediate deep connection with, is not only a cannibalistic serial killer, but now also quite dead, a mere day after they'd first talked.

Though he doesn't cry, his eyes are red rimmed and aching by the time he's home and sinks into a pile of anxious dogs. They can't understand their master's distress, but are eager to soothe it nonetheless, the only way they can, with licks and headbutts. He feels marginally more human and present again after cuddling his pack.

He takes a long hot shower, washing away the sweat and grime and dried remnants of semen, every touch to his own skin a painful reminder that he'll never feel Hannibal's hands again, not even simulated inside a mental construct. That is when the tears finally come, their salty tracks washed away under the spray of his shower.

The water is barely tepid by the time he steps out, feeling bereft and exhausted.

Stepping up to the sink to finish his evening ablutions, he avoids looking in the mirror at his no doubt puffy, splotchy face.

"Will, my darling, don't hide now. Look up."

Will jerks as if electrocuted, head snapping up to the mirror, where, against all common sense and logic, he sees Hannibal standing behind him. And when the man lowers his chin onto his shoulder, pressing a soft kiss to the pulse now racing beneath the skin of his throat, he *feels* it. With the same immediacy and pleasure of a real touch.

"*How?*" Is the only thing Will can manage to croak out.

"My body was starting to shut down by the time you visited me for the first time. I could feel it. Organ failure was in my immediate future. I wasn't quite sure how well my plan would pan out - a rather experimental procedure, one of a kind, in truth. But I had nothing to lose and everything to gain." He presses another kiss to Will's neck, into the soft sensitive spot behind

his ear, nose buried in Will's curls. The oddity of feeling the touch without his hair actually moving beyond bizarre.

"Is this *real*? *Permanent*? What exactly happened?" Will's hand reaches to touch Hannibal's arm where it curls around his waist. If he concentrates a certain way, the limb becomes less solid, less real, his fingers sinking through it.

"None of that now, my love. I'm exactly as real as you will let me. We can sort out the details later, join our mental landscapes more smoothly. Share one large home instead of neighboring plots of land, if you will - to truly become one. You and I have begun to blur, *mylimasis*." Hannibal's hand caresses down the planes of Will's stomach to teasingly tug on his pubic hair, his tongue licking along the column of his throat, lips and teeth worrying at the pulse point. Will wonders if it's actually going to leave a hickey. "We're conjoined now, my love. We won't survive separation."

And Will, his previous despair and grief forgotten, feels only a violent sort of joy as he drags Hannibal into a fervent kiss.

THE END

Chapter End Notes

Before anyone says this should be tagged as MCD, Hannibal *is* alive, even if not in his own body anymore.

I mean, feel free to interpret it in a depressing way, if you're into that, with Will having cracked and hallucinating Hannibal at the end there. But that's not what I intended.

This is the first story I had an actual chapter by chapter outline for before writing. The whole damn thing popped into my head, fully formed, after a screenshot of Beverly's murder tableau reminded me once more of that scene with the horse in The Cell.

And here we are.

Anyways, thanks for reading, all feedback is appreciated ❤️

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